



An Evaluation of the Jazz Ambassadors Program

Executive Report

May 2006

[The Jazz Ambassadors Program] is a vehicle for improving understanding of U.S. society and for opening doors to a variety of publics. Jazz is a metaphor for many of the values we hold dear as Americans, and helps foster the people-to-people connections that promote mutual understanding.

Over the years, Jazz Ambassadors activities have been used to promote goodwill for the U.S. mission in Nigeria. Jazz Ambassadors programs provide an excellent opportunity for Nigerian audiences to appreciate U.S. artistic expression and celebrate common interests.

In keeping with the Mission goal related to public diplomacy and mutual understanding... the Jazz Ambassadors Program reinforces the positive aspects of shared cultural values as jazz performances continue to provide unique insights into American society and culture.

(Department of State Post Staff)

Introduction

In June 2004, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Office of Policy and Evaluation engaged AMS Planning & Research Corp., along with Philliber Research Associates, to conduct an evaluation of the Jazz Ambassadors (JA) Program. Since 1997, the JA Program has sponsored more than 100 American musicians and jazz ensembles in tours across the world. This program evaluation documents the impacts of the JA Program. It also examines how the Department of State (DOS), ECA, and its Embassies and consulates worldwide have used cultural programming, as a means of public diplomacy, to pursue U.S. foreign policy objectives, and promote mutual understanding and cross-cultural exchange and learning.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the following areas:

- Program effectiveness in furthering ECA Bureau objectives, including enhancing mutual understanding, deepening the appreciation of American values through personal contact with American culture, fostering friendly relations and institutional linkages between people and institutions in the United States and overseas.
- The effectiveness of the JA Program, as an instrument of public and cultural diplomacy, in advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives.
- Program efficacy in meeting specific Program objectives such as targeting key audiences and influencing JA Program musicians.
- Post deployment strategies overall, and the ability to leverage the presence of participating musicians for specific foreign policy objectives and targeting key publics.
- The recognition and significance of the Program to Post staff, in-country event co-sponsors, JA musicians, and other Program participants.

Program Description

The JA Program is a response to the mandate of the Fulbright Hays/Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 to establish cultural exchange between Americans and citizens of other countries. Originally piloted by the Cultural Programs Division (in ECA's Office of Citizen

Exchanges), since 1997, the JA Program has been a joint effort of the Department of State (DOS) and its grantee, which provides administrative assistance.

Program Goals and Strategies

The JA program seeks to achieve a wide range of goals, specific to the foreign policy objectives of the State Department, ECA, the Program, and individual Posts. The JA Program also provides alternative ways of bringing a wide range of citizens, political elites, and diplomats together and forging relations among them.

ECA program officers and Post staff identified numerous programs goals, many particular to individual Posts. The evaluation team found the following eight goals among the most prominent:

- **Goal 1 – Fostering mutual understanding:**
 - > Improving attitudes and beliefs about the American people (as demonstrated by the program – creativity, freedom of expression, innovation, liberality of thought, independence, diversity, and individual, civil, and human rights);
 - > Generating goodwill;
 - > Encouraging the mutuality of exchange; and
 - > Increasing awareness of American culture and values.
- **Goal 2 – Cultural Diplomacy: Extending the range and reach of traditional diplomacy.**
 - > Improving attitudes and beliefs about the U.S. government;
 - > Promoting Post and in-country institutional contacts and connections that can strengthen foreign relations;
 - > Facilitating friendly relations between the United States and governments overseas, by offering new perspectives on the United States, its society, and culture; and
 - > Fostering support for other areas of U.S. foreign policy.
- **Goal 3 – Public Diplomacy: Serving as an alternative mechanism for policy dialogue**
 - > Offering activities that provide alternative venues for policy dialogue and bringing together opposing parties, government leaders, foreign diplomatic corps, business people, etc.;
 - > Providing a neutral place to enjoy music and engage; and
 - > Achieving the specific goals articulated by individual Posts.
- **Goal 4 – Targeting and reaching key audiences**
 - > Reaching out to ethnically diverse populations (including religious affiliation), low-income groups, and underserved locations (outside the capital);
 - > Targeting youth and Muslim populations; and
 - > Extending the Program to the largest population possible.
- **Goal 5 – Fostering learning and awareness of American culture and cultural heritage through cultural exchange**
 - > Providing and expanding an awareness of U.S. cultural history;
 - > Exposing audiences to jazz and learning about jazz; and
 - > Identifying cultural commonalities and creating linkages.
- **Goal 6 – Providing music/jazz/cultural education**
 - > Supporting music and jazz education where it is lacking;
 - > Working with students;
 - > Training educators; and
 - > Offering a variety of activities including workshops, master classes, teaching sessions, lectures, and school presentations.

- **Goal 7 – Raising awareness of Post programs and initiatives**
 - > Celebrating special events such as Black History month, Jazz month, and the Fourth of July;
 - > Establishing linkages with local institutions and organizations;
 - > Supporting/promoting local programs; and
 - > Announcing the opening of new facilities, such as American Cultural Centers.
- **Goal 8 – Providing musicians with professional, artistic and personal development opportunities**
 - > Catalyzing professional careers, extending artistic visions and products, and enriching personal lives;
 - > Providing musicians with opportunities to make connections, engage in collaborations with local musicians, establish new contacts with other musicians, and create musical bonds;
 - > Offering an opportunity to learn about other musical forms; and
 - > Initiating career changes.

Program Activities

During each of the past six years, the JA Program has sent seven to 10 American jazz ensembles, on four- to six-week tours, to six targeted regions of the world. Each year, the program highlights different aspects of jazz history and culture through performances, classes and other engagements. The Program offers participants and audiences the opportunity to engage with American musical artists in diverse formal, informal, educational, community-based, and media-related activities. Examples of these activities are highlighted in the following chart:

Formal	Educational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerts open to the public • Official receptions • Private events at an Official Residence (or similar) • Activities for local communities and local community groups • Activities for ethnic or other minorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master classes/clinics/hands-on educational workshops • Lectures/school presentations
Informal	Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jam sessions with local musicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press conferences/media events

JA Program Activities

Formal events represent approximately 47% of total reported Program activity types. Educational events account for another 25%, Media 16%, and Informal 12%.

JA activities reach audiences of different sizes. Of particular interest is the range of audience sizes for specific activities and events. Post staff report significantly large numbers of participants across a variety of program activities:

- Almost 70% of concerts open to the public reached audiences of 200 or more.
- The majority of official receptions included 100 or more attendees.
- There was a considerable range in the number of participants in activities targeted to ethnic and other minorities. Nearly 50% of these activities served from 101 to 200 or more people.
- Local community and community group activities drew reasonably sized numbers of participants, with 41% reaching 101- 200 or more people.
- More educationally focused activities, like master classes/clinics workshops, and jam sessions, which are intended for smaller groups, generally included 50 or fewer participants.

- There was more diversity in audience size for lectures and school presentations, which were generally attended by larger audiences.

Overall, Posts sought to reach as many people as possible. While press conferences and media events drew large in-person audiences, JA Program exposure was effectively extended beyond the activity venue to the broader community through television, radio and newspaper.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology relied upon multiple techniques to gather both quantitative and qualitative data for the evaluation process (please see *Evaluation Methodology* section of the full report). Key elements included the following:

1. **On-line surveys** of DOS staff who had managed or been involved in the JA Program while at Posts overseas, including Foreign Service Officers (especially Deputy Chiefs of Mission), Public Affairs Officers and Assistants, Cultural Affairs Officers and Assistants, other diplomatic staff, and Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) who served as cultural affairs or public affairs specialists.

A total of 143 staff completed surveys, representing 77 Posts that had hosted the JA Program. All regions of the world were well covered, with respondents representing more than 60% of all Posts that had participated in the JA Program.

2. **Site visits** to Posts which had hosted multiple JA Programs in the recent past. The purpose of the site visits was to gather first-hand input from United States Ambassadors, Deputy Chiefs of Mission, Public Affairs Office and Cultural Office staff, past program participants, and representatives from in-country cultural and educational institutions. Interviews and focus groups provided critical data for qualitative analysis.

Site visits were made to four countries: Bulgaria, Honduras, India, and Cameroon, covering the regions of Europe and Eurasia, the Western Hemisphere, South Asia, and Africa. The evaluation team conducted more than 160 interviews during these visits.

3. **On-line surveys and telephone interviews** with JA Program musicians. The survey was distributed to 127 musicians; ultimately, the team was able to contact 104 of 127 musicians who had participated in the Program.

Collectively, survey respondents described 101 total Program tour experiences. Forty-five percent of these tour experiences occurred during 2003-04, while another 29% occurred during 2001-02. The remainder occurred prior to 2001.

Additional evaluation components included content analysis of existing documentation on the Program and interviews with State Department and grantee organization administrators.

Overall Evaluation Findings

Virtually all of those who participated in this evaluation – from United States Ambassadors, to music school students, to representatives of broadcast media in host countries, to Foreign Service Nationals, and American jazz musicians – provided compelling evidence that the Jazz Ambassadors Program is highly regarded and very effective in achieving Post and Program goals.

Overall:

- Ninety-seven percent of those who responded to the survey of Post staff believed JA programming is “very effective” or “somewhat effective” in reaching Post goals.
- Musicians held similar views, with 95% of those aware of Post goals reporting their ensembles were either “very” or “somewhat” effective in helping reach these goals.

Evaluation findings for each Program goal are summarized in the following pages.

Fostering Mutual Understanding

Post staff, musicians and those interviewed during site visits agreed that the JA Program is highly effective in promoting mutual understanding. This is accomplished in diverse ways: showing the “human” face of America, counteracting stereotypes, and celebrating common interests. In addition, evaluation respondents agreed that jazz is an appropriate medium for showcasing American values, such as freedom of expression, creativity, and liberality of thought, while fostering people-to-people connections. It generates considerable goodwill among a wide variety of publics.

Ninety percent or more of Post staff agreed the JA Program is effective in:

- Improving attitudes and beliefs about the American people (94%); and
- Creating mutual understanding and strengthening relations with other countries (90%).

Musicians reported similar levels of JA effectiveness. In addition, 95% of Post staff agreed that the JA Program is effective in generating goodwill and 98% of JA musicians agreed their ensembles were effective in representing American values like creativity and freedom of expression.

In sum, this evaluation found that the JA Program is highly successful in promoting mutual understanding among citizens all over the world, a key component of public diplomacy.

Cultural Diplomacy: Extending the Range and Reach of Traditional Diplomacy

Nearly 90% of Post respondents believe that cultural exchange and performing arts programs like the JA Program are important in helping Posts accomplish their missions. Post staff reported they used the JA Program to extend diplomatic efforts through cultural exchange and outreach to those who would not normally participate in other Post programs, including national opinion leaders in host countries and those with negative opinions of the United States. In many countries, those who influence the “national ethos” – like university scholars and cultural figures – may not be interested in other Post offerings or may not attend events that are perceived as “too political” or supportive of U.S. foreign policy. JA activities, as non-political cultural events, allowed Posts to reach key constituents in a unique and meaningful way.

High-level Post staff (including United States Ambassadors) stated that programs like JA are important for maintaining position among their diplomatic colleagues. A number of them commented that the United States does not offer many cultural programs in comparison to those offered by other governments, particularly by their European counterparts. Post staff also stated the Program was beneficial in enhancing relations in countries that place high values on music, the arts, and similar expressions of culture.

Ninety-five percent of Post staff agreed the JA Program is effective in improving attitudes and beliefs about the U.S. government. The Program presents a wider view of the United States, reinforcing cultural ties between the United States and other countries and “softening positions” during times of political tensions. The Program also offered Posts a unique opportunity to build partnerships with local institutions, resulting in additional benefits for these institutions and their constituents.

Overall, the JA Program is an effective instrument of cultural diplomacy, reaching important contacts that may not attend or participate in other Post programs. Program activities are effective in highlighting cultural commonalities, showing U.S. support for the arts and culture, and softening political positions.

Public Diplomacy: Serving as an Alternative Mechanism for Policy Dialogue

Post respondents view the JA Program as integral to public diplomacy, reaching key, upper-level contacts and providing alternative venues for policy dialogue, in diverse policy areas, for example, economic policy and foreign policy. During private concerts and receptions, Post staff are able to engage government officials, legislators, members of the diplomatic corps, and other dignitaries in more intimate discussions to advance individual Mission goals, in other spheres.

Results from Post surveys and site visits provide evidence that the JA Program is successful in accomplishing goals of public diplomacy.

- More than 90% of Post staff agreed that JA activities are effective in extending the reach of traditional diplomacy; and
- More than 80% of Post staff agreed the JA Program is effective in providing alternative venues for policy dialogue.

JA activities help raise Missions' public profiles, strengthen existing diplomatic relationships, re-ignite dormant relationships, and nurture new connections. In a number of instances, JA events have even been successful in bringing together opposing political parties for discussions in an informal and non-threatening setting.

This program creates opportunities for Foreign Service Officers to strengthen mutual understanding and diplomatic relationships with other diplomats, political leaders, and citizens of other countries around the world.

(Post survey respondent)

In sum, the JA Program is a successful tool for public diplomacy, providing unique opportunities for policy dialogue. Private events, featuring music as a focal point, enable Post staff to reach a wide range of high-level contacts to advance Mission goals.

Targeting and Reaching Key Audiences

Posts around the world strategically deployed JA Program activities to reach targeted audiences. These audiences, key to Posts' public diplomacy efforts, included young people, Muslim populations, those in underserved locations, ethnic minorities, and the socio-economically disadvantaged.

- Ninety-seven percent of Post staff agreed that the JA Program provides the kinds of activities they need to reach these targeted audiences.

Most of the Post staff surveyed agreed the JA Program is effective in reaching youth and ethnic and other minorities. JA activities reached targeted youth in such diverse countries as India; Podgorica, Serbia and Montenegro; Laos and Indonesia; Colombia, Brazil and Honduras; and Morocco and Israel. Similarly, activities reached Muslim populations in Cambodia, Oman, Turkey, Niger and Nigeria, and other locations in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Musicians highlighted particular performances that enabled them to reach special groups:

- In Indonesia, free performances were scheduled in three major cities in order to promote jazz as a uniquely American art form with "younger, broader, deeper" audiences.
- In Cambodia, JA musicians performed with a Muslim children's choir.
- In Oman, JA musicians "presented a special performance for Muslim women who would have felt uncomfortable attending a mixed concert."
- In Turkey, they presented a concert for Turkish Cypriots, an ethnic minority in that country.
- JA musicians played for homeless and orphaned children in Colombia and Morocco, demonstrating U.S. concern for disadvantaged youth.

In addition, eighty percent or more of Post staff believed the JA Program was effective in reaching the general public, official guests, host government officials, education and cultural institutions, members of the diplomatic corps, and the local media.

Overall, the JA Program is highly effective in reaching audiences strategically targeted by U.S. Posts. The power of music to appeal to young people and those from geographic and ethnic minority groups enhances Posts' public and cultural diplomacy efforts in countries across the globe.

Fostering Learning and Awareness of American Culture and Cultural Heritage

When describing their deployment of the JA Program, Post staff mentioned most frequently the goal of facilitating cultural exchange to cultivate greater awareness of U.S. culture, to support the discovery of cultural commonalities, and to establish linkages between American cultural communities and those in host countries. Through workshops, master classes and public performances, JA musicians expose people around the world to a uniquely American cultural product while creating nonverbal bonds that transcend cultural, religious and political differences. Opportunities for JA musicians to interact and play with local musicians is another key aspect of this cultural exchange, supporting other Program goals including fostering mutual understanding, supporting cultural diplomacy, and targeting key audiences.

Both Post staff and musicians agreed that jazz, as a uniquely American art form, appeals to all age groups and makes use of a wide range of expressive forms that can be appreciated by diverse audiences. Both agreed that jazz is a "high quality" representation of American culture in stark contrast to other American commercialized cultural exports.

Post respondents and JA musicians provided strong evidence, often stated in very eloquent terms, that the JA Program is highly successful in promoting cultural exchange between the United States and countries around the world:

The most important objective is people-to-people cultural exchange, allowing people from countries where there is no or little access to information about the United States to meet with American musicians, feel American music and culture first-hand, and provide American musicians with the charge to interact with international musicians, thus enriching understanding of others' cultures.
(Post Survey respondent)

- Ninety-five percent of Post staff believed the JA Program is effective in increasing awareness of American culture or cultural heritage.
- Post staff also tended to agree that: 1) JA Program musicians establish a musical bond (artistic dialogue) with musicians and students in the countries they visit; 2) Audiences learn something about jazz during the performances; 3) The program is effective in developing relationships among American jazz musicians and musicians abroad; and 4) JA musicians reach audiences who have never heard American jazz before.
- Almost all musicians agreed that they established musical bonds, taught audiences about jazz, and expressed something significant about American culture.
- The majority of musicians (68%) indicated they had established or planned to continue collaborations that grew out of their JA experiences.

In sum, the JA Program is highly effective in fostering learning and awareness of American culture and cultural heritage. Music is an ideal vehicle for cultural exchange, creating bonds that extend to musicians and "common citizens" alike, and continuing through on-going contacts and collaborations beyond the JA tours themselves.

Providing Music/Jazz/Cultural Education

Post staff frequently cited the provision of musical education as a key goal in their deployment of the JA Program. JA musicians share knowledge and expertise with music students, students in other areas of study, and local musicians. Workshops, master classes and other educational presentations are frequently offered in partnership with local music schools and other organizations, strengthening bonds between Posts and in-country institutions.

Several Post respondents noted that music education (and especially jazz education) is not readily available in their host countries. For many of the students and local musicians reached by Jazz Ambassadors, the encounter is the first they have ever had with a professional musician and with an American.

- More than 90% of Post respondents agreed the Program is effective in reaching students and local musicians; more than 80% believed it is effective in reaching education and cultural institutions.
- Nearly all musicians (98%) agreed that they established musical bonds or artistic dialogues with the musicians and students they reached.

Post staff and musicians also agreed that JA events were enthusiastically received by audiences at educational events, which tend to be as rewarding for the American musicians as they are for the participants. These events, which are typically co-sponsored by local institutions, help spark interests in music and jazz as well as in American culture as a whole.

In sum, the JA Program is highly effective in providing jazz and other types of musical and cultural education to people all over the world. JA educational events enable Posts to partner with local educational and cultural institutions to extend experiences with American culture to students, local musicians, and other citizens of host countries.

Raising Awareness of Post Programs and Initiatives

An unexpected evaluation finding is that U.S. Posts integrate the JA Program with other Post initiatives to raise awareness of programs and facilities that are key to accomplishing Post missions in host countries. The JA Program gives U.S. Posts the opportunity to raise awareness of Post programs and special initiatives, such as HIV/AIDS prevention, special events, like the 4th of July and Black History Month, and marking the opening of new facilities, like American Cultural Centers, American Corners, and Binational Centers.

Posts utilize JA events to elicit positive audience responses and boost attendance. Many of these activities are conducted in collaboration with other organizations, which demonstrates American support for local festivals, institutions, and initiatives.

Survey comments provide substantial evidence that JA activities help support Post missions in their host countries, not only raising awareness and building local connections but also conferring benefits upon partnering organizations and their constituencies.

Overall, the JA Program is effectively integrated by Posts with other initiatives to raise awareness of programs and facilities that are key to accomplishing Post missions. JA musical performances attract larger publics and offer Posts unique opportunities to establish linkages with local institutions, celebrate special events, support public information campaigns, and promote local organizations.

Providing Musicians with Professional, Artistic, and Personal Development Opportunities

Some of the most articulate testimonials on the impact of the JA Program are in the area of professional, artistic, and personal development opportunities for participating musicians. Most Jazz Ambassadors report the Program provides life-changing experiences for participating musicians. Benefits are illustrated in the following quotes:

I have been fortunate enough to perform all over the world and without a doubt the Jazz Ambassadors program was one of the most memorable experiences of my career.

My experience unlocked many doors that led to freedom of expression both musically and personally. The way I relate to people from different walks of life is much more personable and open-minded to their cultural values. I have an even deeper respect and understanding of diversity in all its forms.

Overall:

- Almost all musicians (95%) believed the Program made personal impacts and most (89%) indicated the JA experience had at least some impact on their musical visions.

- Most (88%) believed the program had at least some impact on how they performed and engaged audiences, and most (80%) also indicated the Program had either “a great impact” or “some impact” on their professional careers.

In terms of professional development, musicians reported the JA Program helped them: achieve greater name recognition and publicity; gain professional contacts for pursuing future opportunities; and gain performance opportunities and additional collaboration with their ensembles.

In the area of artistry and artistic vision, musicians reported that being exposed to new musical styles and ideas inspired them and enhanced their compositions and performances. In addition, the vast majority of musicians believe the Program has had a profound effect upon their personal lives. These personal impacts stem from the opportunity to see new places, experience new cultures, and meet new people, some of whom become lasting friends.

Overall, participating in the JA Program provides musicians with once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that enhance their careers, their music, and their personal lives. Musicians describe the traveling and performing as “remarkable”, “inspirational,” and “eye-opening”. This evidence, along with other evaluation results, suggests the JA Program has positive impacts on all those involved.

The Multiplier Effect

Some of the strongest evidence in support of the success of the JA Program as an alternative tool for U.S. diplomacy involves the extent to which the Program creates a “multiplier effect” in participating countries. That is, program impacts are heightened and extended due to: 1) the large public audiences attracted to high-profile JA events; and 2) the significant media coverage enjoyed by JA musicians and activities.

Individual JA Program events reach audiences of hundreds of people around the world; Post staff report these audiences are far larger than those reached by other Post programming.

- Almost 70% of concerts open to the public had audiences of 200 or more. The majority of official receptions included 100 or more attendees.
- Local community and community group events, as well as those for ethnic and other minorities, drew audiences of 100 to 200 or more.

Media coverage was vital in reaching key audiences. Post staff was extremely satisfied with media coverage, with high marks for non-government/private newspapers and radio, and government/public television. Broadcast coverage not only includes radio and TV spots advertising JA events but also interviews with JA musicians and broadcasts (and re-broadcasts) of JA concerts. Indeed, many Post staff observed that media coverage garnered by JA activities is far greater than the attention usually given to other Post programs. Most, if not all, of this coverage is very positive, further supporting Mission public diplomacy goals.

In sum, the JA Program reaches exponentially more individuals through large public concerts and positive media coverage than the numbers reached by other types of Post programming. Highly positive media coverage of musicians and performances emblematic of American values and culture reaches millions of people worldwide, extending JA impacts to create mutual understanding and foster positive attitudes toward the United States.

Conclusion

Evaluation results provide rich and compelling evidence that the JA Program is not only a unique approach to extending traditional, public diplomacy strategies for Posts around the world, it is also extremely effective. Music (including jazz) is a language understood by people regardless of their social, political and cultural differences. This universal language can help overcome longstanding barriers to mutual understanding among those in the highest levels of their

governments as well as those living in impoverished conditions in some of the poorest countries of the world.

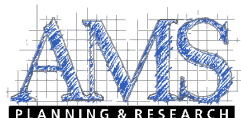
The JA Program is a highly successful vehicle for conveying this uniquely American music – instilled with American cultural heritage and American values – to millions of people, worldwide. Virtually all those who participated in this evaluation, whether they were United States Ambassadors, Post Staff, accomplished American musicians, amateur and professional musicians in Third World countries, managers of media outlets and cultural organizations, or young music students, agreed that this remarkable program accomplished far-ranging and important goals for U.S. foreign policy. These goals include fostering mutual understanding, extending the range and reach of traditional diplomacy through cultural diplomacy, serving as an alternative mechanism for policy dialogue, strategically targeting and reaching key audiences, fostering learning and awareness of American culture, and raising awareness of Post programs and activities. This evidence suggests the JA Program has been enormously successful. In its recent reformulation as American Music Abroad, the program's emphasis on jazz should continue to provide U.S. Posts with effective tools for public diplomacy.

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